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AUTHOR Wulfemeyer, K. Tim
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the perceptions about what is and is not ethical behavior in electronic journalism. Subjects, 220 television news directors and 66 radio news directors, responded to a 117-item survey of ethics in electronic journalism. Results indicated that the news directors identified: (1) 10 "acceptable" behaviors, including working a second job, entering journalistic contests, and going "undercover" for a story; (2) 20 "unacceptable" behaviors, including taking "freebies," doing commercials, paying for information, and doing public relations for profit-making companies; and (3) some "gray area" behaviors, including conducting ambush interviews, using hidden cameras and microphones, and holding stories when asked to do so by government officials. (Twenty-three notes and three tables of data are included.) (RS)

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Radio-Television Journalism

What's Ethical and What's Not In Electronic Journalism: Perceptions of News Directors

K. Tim Wulfemeyer
Department of Journalism
San Diego State University
San Diego, California 92182-0116
(619) 594-6790

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What's Ethical and What's Not in Electronic Journalism: Perceptions of New Directors

K. Tim Wulfemeyer
Associate Professor
Department of Journalism
San Diego State University
San Diego, California

ABSTRACT

The ethics of journalists has been a "hot" topic in recent years. Critics have complained about alleged invasions of privacy, misrepresentation, sensationalism, conflicts of interest and declining credibility.

Research findings are mixed on just how serious the problem is, but there is no doubt that a problem exists. One of the factors that makes studying ethics-related issues somewhat difficult is there is very little consensus about how to define ethics--what is ethical behavior and what is not ethical behavior?

In this study, ethical theory, journalistic theory and guidelines from codes of ethics were used as a basis for a survey of radio and television news directors to determine their perceptions about what is and what is not ethical behavior in electronic journalism.

The news directors identified approximately 10 "acceptable" behaviors. These included working at a second job, belonging to a community organization, entering journalistic contests, going "undercover" to gather news and granting confidentiality.

The news directors identified approximately 20 "unacceptable" behaviors. These included taking most freebies, doing commercials, paying for information, airing the names of accident victims before families have been notified, requiring licenses of prospective journalists and punishing journalists who violate ethics code guidelines.

Some "gray-area" behaviors were also identified. These included conducting ambush interviews, using hidden cameras and microphones and holding stories when asked to do so by government officials.

The findings were based on the responses of 286 news directors.

What's Ethical and What's Not in Electronic Journalism: Perceptions of News Directors

Concerns about the ethics of journalists have received a great deal of attention in recent years. Most of the attention has focused on alleged "credibility" problems and even though research is mixed on the subject, it is clear that many people in the United States believe that journalists are not as ethical and fair as they should be.[1]

Journalists have tried a variety of ways to alter this impression. Seminars, workshops, panel discussions and meetings have been conducted, articles have been written, magazines and newsletters have been started and more rigid guidelines for ethics codes have been suggested.[2]

One of the main difficulties connected with any attempt to improve the ethics of journalists and develop or revise ethics codes in journalism is that there is very little black or white and a great deal of gray involved. Actions that some people judge to be ethical are judged unethical by others.[3] Actions that under certain circumstances are labeled ethical, under other circumstances are labeled unethical.[4]

Defining ethics in journalism, as in other disciplines, is difficult because of the inherent problem of finding consistent unanimity of thought, opinion and perspective for establishing standards of conduct and moral judgments. Another problem is the apparent all-encompassing nature of journalistic ethics.

It has to do with duty to self and others.[5] It has to do with freedom, obligations, values and personal responsibility. It has to do with

determining what is "good" and "right" and "fair." It has to do with guiding principles and commitment to such principles. It is, as John Merrill describes it, "a swampland of philosophical speculation where eerie mists of judgment hang low over a boggy terrain."[6]

The purpose of this study was to survey broadcast news directors to continue the process of trying to determine just what is and what is not ethical behavior in electronic journalism. Electronic journalism was selected for study, because most Americans rely on electronic journalists to provide them with information about what is happening in the world.[7]

A recent study is a good illustration of the definition problem inherent in the process of developing codes of ethics in journalism. Vernon Stone found that radio and television stations rarely fire anyone for violating ethics codes or standards.[8] Only about 6% of the TV stations and 1% of the radio stations responding to his survey in late 1986 reported that a staffer had been fired for ethics violations during the preceding 12 months. Stone concluded his study suggested that ethics is NOT a major problem in broadcast journalism.

Stone's conclusion may be correct and it is certainly true that clearly news directors do not perceive many ethics-related problems, but that does not necessarily mean that there are NO problems. There are problems, of course, but news directors simply do not JUDGE certain behaviors as unethical and so they perceive no problems.

Subjective judgments and situational ethics abound in journalism, especially electronic journalism, because reporters, editors, producers, photographers and announcers are very often forced to make difficult,

split-second decisions under extremely trying conditions; however, there are two traditional theories of ethics that journalists can use to help them in their attempts to decide how to conduct themselves.[9]

Teleology emphasizes the consequences of an action or decision. The "correct" behavior can either be that which is best for the journalist(egoism) or that which is best for the greatest number of people(utilitarianism). Egoism fosters a type of "I'll do anything for a good story" philosophy that many people apparently believe dominates journalism.[10] Pressures to meet deadlines, to land jobs with bigger and better news organizations, to keep from being fired and to increase ratings or circulation have a tendency to force even the most utilitarian-minded journalist to embrace egoism as the only way to survive the day-to-day rigors of the profession.

Deontology emphasizes the nature of an action or a decision. "Pure Rule Deontology" stresses that there are universal rights and wrongs. "Pure Act Deontology" stresses that circumstances dictate what is right and wrong. Deontology encompasses the "Golden Rule" ideal of acting as you would like others to act. A sense of fairness, objectivity and egalitarianism pervades the theory.

The "Social Responsibility Theory of the Press" provides additional guidance for electronic journalists.[11] The theory emphasizes six major roles that a news organization should play:

1. Serve the political system by providing information, discussion and debate on public affairs.

2. Enlighten people to help them be capable of self-government.

3. Protect the rights of individuals by serving as a watchdog against government.

4. Serve the economic system by bringing together buyers and sellers of goods and services.

5. Provide entertainment.

6. Stay free from the control of special interests.

In addition, the Social Responsibility Theory requires news organizations to report fairly, accurately and completely. It requires that information about events and issues be presented in a context that gives them meaning. Finally, it demands that opposing points of view be reported.

Theories can provide a general framework for ethical decision-making, but the vagaries of journalistic ethics have prompted many journalists to abandon the quest to develop any uniform conduct standards for the profession. The difficulties have not stopped the Radio-Television News Directors Association(RTNDA) from adopting a new "Code of Broadcast News Ethics," though.[12]

Like most codes of ethics in journalism, the new RTNDA code is fairly general and there are no provisions for penalizing broadcast journalists who violate any of the guidelines. Still, the new code does attempt to define some aspects of ethics. It also attempts to establish some baselines of "professional behavior" and it is about half as long as the old RTNDA code that was originally adopted in 1966 and amended in 1973.

The new code contains the following provisions:

1. Electronic journalists will present the source and nature of information in a balanced, accurate and fair manner.

2. Electronic journalists will decline gifts or favors which would influence or appear to influence their judgments.

3. Electronic journalists will respect the dignity, well-being, privacy and right to a fair trial of the people with whom they deal.

4. Electronic journalists will no mislead or deceive people through the misuse of audio, video or reporting techniques.

5. Electronic journalists will actively encourage all journalists to abide by code guidelines.

The Society of Professional Journalists' "Code of Ethics" provides guidelines for electronic journalists to follow when they are confronted with ethical dilemmas.[13] In general, the SPJ code stresses the importance of preserving a bond of mutual trust between journalists and the public . The code encourages journalists to seek and report the truth in an intelligent, objective, accurate and fair manner. The SPJ code contains the following provisions:

1. Journalists must be free of any obligations other than to help the public know the truth.

2. Journalists should accept nothing of value from news sources.

3. Journalists should avoid secondary employment, political involvement, holding public office and service in community organizations if their integrity could be compromised.

4. Journalists should separate fact from opinion and clearly label presentations devoted to advocacy or personal conclusions.

5. Journalists at all times will show respect for the dignity, privacy , rights and well-being of people encountered in the course of gathering and presenting the news.

6. Journalists should not pander to people's morbid curiosity about the details of sex, crime, vice and violence.

7. Journalists should actively censure newspeople who violate ethical standards.

Any code of ethics, if it is going to work, must have the support of a significant number of the people for whom it is written. Codes can provide guidelines, but individuals must choose to follow such guidelines. They must choose to be ethical. This study attempts to determine how likely it is that broadcast news directors will choose to be ethical.

Few systematic studies of ethics in electronic journalism have been conducted, but a major 1983 survey of members of the Society of Professional Journalists, the RTNDA and the Associated Press Managing Editors that found that about 83% of the RTNDA members who responded thought at least some "freebies" were acceptable.[14] About 98% believed at least some "moonlighting" opportunities were acceptable. About half of the respondents thought eavesdropping to gather information was appropriate behavior. Finally, about 75% believed it was appropriate for staffers to enter journalistic contests.

The responses of the RTNDA members were reasonably similar to those of the SPJ and APME members. The newspaper journalists were somewhat less tolerant of "freebies" and somewhat more tolerant of journalistic contests than were the electronic journalists.

Theories of ethics, theories of journalism, codes of ethics and the results of previous research studies provide some general guidelines and insights for helping electronic journalists decide how to act when confronted with ethical dilemmas, but they provide few specifics. This study attempted to determine the perceptions of radio and television news directors in an effort to discover if some definite lines can begin to be drawn between what is and what is not ethical behavior in electronic journalism.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do news directors feel about potential conflicts of interest?

2. How do news directors feel about respecting the privacy of individuals?

3. How do news directors feel about selected reporting techniques and styles?

4. How do news directors feel about selected newscast production techniques and styles?

5. How do news directors feel about selected suggestions for improving ethics in broadcast journalism?

6. Are there medium-related differences in the perceptions of news directors?

7. Are there market-size-related differences in the perceptions of news directors?[15]

METHODS

After interviews with 25 journalists and journalism educators and a comprehensive literature review, a 117-question survey dealing with ethics in electronic journalism was developed. The survey was pre-tested with 12 local radio and television news directors and journalism educators. Some minor revisions in wording and question order were made as a result of the pre-test.

Between May and November, 1985, surveys were sent to 538 news directors at network-affiliated television stations in the United States.[16] During June, 1987, surveys were sent to 200 news directors at "all news" radio stations in the United States.[17] The results reported in this paper are based on the responses of 220 television news directors and 66 radio news directors.[18]

FINDINGS

Codes

About 41% of the stations had adopted a formal code of ethics. About 41% of the television stations and 39% of the radio stations followed formal codes. (X^2=.1808, df=1, ns) About 39% of the large-market stations, 36% of the medium-market stations and 45% of the small-market stations followed formal codes. (X^2=1.663, df=2, ns)

The Radio-Television News Directors Association "Code of Ethics" was the most often adopted code(33%). A station or company code was adopted by 24%. Multiple codes, a network code, the Society of Professional Journalists code and the National Association of Broadcasters code were among the others that were adopted.

About 94% of the television news directors and 94% of the radio news directors said electronic journalists should follow the guidelines contained in formal codes of ethics. The news directors mentioned four major advantages of adopting a formal code of ethics:[19]

(1)Provides standards for staffers, especially new staffers(70%)

(2)Improves the ethics of staffers(35%)

(3)Improves the social responsibility of staffers(15%)

(4)Improves credibility and public trust(5%)

The news directors also listed three major disadvantages of adopting a formal code of ethics:[20]

(1)Inhibits flexibility and individual judgment(65%)

(2)Guidelines too vague and general(32%)

(3)Creates potential legal problems(7%)[21]

Conflicts of Interest

About 54% of the news directors thought that at least some "freebies" were acceptable. (See TABLE 1) More radio news directors than television news directors approved of freebies.

Tickets to cover news and sports events were judged to be the most acceptable freebies. Free food and non-alcoholic beverages provided at such news and sports events were judged acceptable by about half of the news directors. Free food and non-alcoholic beverages provided at "media parties" and other non-news events were rated acceptable by about one-third of the news directors. In each case, radio news directors thought the freebies were more acceptable than did television news directors.

Among the least acceptable freebies were trips to non-news events for personal pleasure, special discounts on merchandise that were not available to the general public and token gifts.

When asked to set a maximum dollar value for an "acceptable" freebie, about 95% of the news directors mentioned amounts of $25 or less. About 50% of the news directors said electronic journalists should accept absolutely nothing of value from news sources.

About 81% of the news directors thought that at least some "moonlighting" opportunities were acceptable. (See TABLE 2) More radio than television news directors approved of moonlighting.

Jobs not related to journalism were judged the most acceptable secondary employment opportunities. Play-by-play sports announcing for another station owned by the same company was thought to be acceptable by about two-thirds of the news directors.

The least acceptable moonlighting opportunities included acting in or narrating local commercials. Working in the public relations department of profit-making companies also was frowned upon.

About 92% of the news directors said it was okay for electronic journalists to belong to community groups and organizations. (See TABLE 3) Small-market news directors approved of the practice the most. Almost two-thirds of the news directors felt it was acceptable for electronic journalists to hold office in community groups and organizations.

All of the news directors thought it was okay for electronic journalists to enter contests sponsored by journalism-related organizations, but only about 68% thought it was acceptable to enter contests sponsored by commercial or charitable organizations.

About 27% of the news directors felt that the self-interests of electronic journalists too often affected the content of broadcast news. Radio news directors and small-market news directors perceived the most conflicts.

Invasion of Privacy

About 74% of the news directors believed electronic journalists should NOT intrude on a person's "private grief" during times of tragedy. About 80%

thought well-known people do NOT have as much right to privacy as do unknown people. Small-market news directors were more supportive of equal treatment for all people than were large- or medium-market news directors.

About 75% of the news directors said developments in the private lives of public people should be reported only when it is clear that such developments affect the public duties of public people.

About 40% of the news directors said hidden cameras and microphones should NOT be used to gather news. Radio news directors were much more opposed to the practice than were television news directors.

About 47% of the news directors said electronic journalists should NOT conduct "ambush interviews." About 68% said reading memos or looking through folders in a news source's office without permission was NOT acceptable.

About 91% of the news directors said the names of rape victims should NOT be broadcast. Almost all of the news directors said the names of accident victims should NOT be released until family members have been notified. About 85% said suicides should NOT be reported unless public people are involved. About 62% thought there should be absolutely no restrictions on who or what can be videotaped or recorded in courtrooms.

Reporting Techniques/Styles

About 84% of the news directors thought it was okay for electronic journalists to go "undercover" to gather news. About 88% thought it was NOT acceptable to pay sources for information. About 31% felt it was okay to "go live" simply for the sake of going live. About 80% said electronic journalists should "pool" equipment when asked to do so by government officials. About

37% thought electronic journalists should "hold" stories if asked to do so by government officials. More radio than television news directors supported the practice.

About 92% of the news directors said it was inappropriate for electronic journalists to play "dirty tricks" on competitors--unplugging microphone cords, cutting off electricity, etc. About 24% thought it was okay for electronic journalists who are in "hot pursuit" of a story to violate traffic laws. About 59% felt electronic journalists should try to assist the victims involved in news events. Small-market news directors supported the "compassionate journalist" philosophy more than did large- or medium-market news directors.

Although about 96% of the news directors thought it was okay to grant confidentialty to news sources, about 54% thought there was too much quoting of unnamed sources in electronic journalism. More television than radio news directors were concerned about anonymous attribution. About 70% said stories that contain quotes from unnamed sources should NOT air unless the news director or newscast producer knows the names of the sources.

Newscast Production Techniques/Styles

About 38% of the news directors said there was too much emphasis on sex, crime and violence in electronic journalism. About 35% thought there was too much emphasis on "entertainment-related" stories and feature stories. About 19% thought there was too much emphasis on visuals and natural sound. About 82% thought that too often broadcast news stories do NOT provide enough background information to help people understand the meaning and significance of events and issues.

About 51% of the news directors felt broadcast journalists should edit or clean-up profane language used by sources. About 43% believed factual mistakes made by sources should be corrected or edited before broadcast. About 22% thought grammar mistakes made by sources should be corrected or edited before broadcast.

About 34% of the news directors said that in reports of dangerous or illegal stunts, the names of the "daredevils" should NOT be aired. About 12% said that in reports of acts of terrorism, the names and affiliations of the people who commit such acts should NOT be aired.

Improving Ethics in Broadcast Journalism

About 15% of the news directors believed prospective broadcast journalists should have to take a prescribed course of academic study and be licensed before being allowed to practice their craft. More radio than television news directors and more medium- and small-market than large-market news directors wanted more uniform training standards for broadcast journalists.

About 28% of the news directors thought the Radio-Television News Directors Association or a similar organization should have the power to censure, fine, suspend or sanction in some way broadcast journalists who violate accepted standards of ethical conduct.

DISCUSSION

Most of the news directors who took part in this study could be called "Mixed-Act Deontologists." They appreciated the guidelines provided by

ethics codes, but seemed unwilling to give up the right to analyze situations individually or lose the right to consider unique circumstances and possible consequences of various actions. Many complained about the difficulty of drawing absolute lines and qualified their responses with such comments as: "Each situation is unique;" "We use a case-by-case approach;" "Circumstances are different;" "Depends on situation;" "Most of the time."

Despite the news directors' reservations about setting any "absolutes" in the area of journalistic ethics, some patterns emerged that indicate there are at least some behaviors that are generally acceptable and some that are generally unacceptable for electronic journalists.

The following behaviors were judged acceptable by about two-thirds of the news directors:

(1)Working at a second job, especially a job not related to journalism.

(2)Belonging to and holding office in community organizations.

(3)Entering journalistic contests.

(4)Reporting on the private lives of public people.

(5)Going "undercover" to gather news.

(6)Granting confidentiality to sources.

(7)Airing quotes from unnamed sources, but only if a news executive is told the names of such sources.

(8)"Pooling" equipment when asked to do so by government officials.

(9)Reporting on the private lives of public people.

(10)Airing the names of "daredevils" and terrorists.

The following behaviors were judged unacceptable by about two-thirds of the news directors:

(1)Accepting free trips for personal pleasure.

(2)Taking advantage of special discounts not offered to the general public.

(3)Accepting token gifts from news sources.

(4)Accepting free alcoholic beverages.

(5)Accepting free tickets to non-news events for personal pleasure.

(6)Accepting free trips to cover news/sports events

(7)Accepting free food and non-alcoholic beverages at non-news events.

(8)Acting in or narrating local commercials.

(9)Doing public relations for profit-making companies

(10)Intruding on the private grief of people during times of tragedy.

(11)Reading memos or rifling the desk of a news source without permission.

(12)Paying news sources for information.

(13)Playing "dirty tricks" on competitors.

(14)Violating traffic laws when in "hot pursuit" of a story.

(15)Going "live" without good reason.

(16)Airing the names of rape victims.

(17)Airing the names of accident victims before family members have been notified.

(18)Reporting on suicides unless a public person is involved.

(19)Correcting grammar mistakes made by sources.

(20)Requiring prospective electronic journalists to obtain a license before they are allowed to practice their craft.

(21)Establishing sanctions for electronic journalists who violate accepted standards of ethics.

The news directors were more evenly split on the acceptability of the following behaviors:

(1)Accepting any kind of "freebie" from a news source.

(2)Acting in or narrating "out-of-market" commercials.

(3)Doing public relations for non-profit organizations.

(4)Announcing play-by-play sports for another station.

(5)Assisting the victims involved in news stories.

(6)Using hidden cameras or microphones to gather news.

(7)Conducting "ambush interviews."

(8)Cleaning up profanity used by news sources.

(9)Correcting the factual mistakes made by news sources.

(10)Holding stories if asked to do so by government officials.

There were a few statistically significant differences between the perceptions of radio and television news directors. Radio news directors were more tolerant of freebies and moonlighting. This is somewhat understandable because salaries paid to radio journalists are relatively low.[22]

Radio news directors were less tolerant of using hidden cameras or microphones to gather news and they were more tolerant of the practice of holding stories when asked to do so by government officials. Radio news directors were more supportive of the idea of requiring prospective electronic journalists to obtain a license before being allowed to practice their craft.

More radio than television news directors thought the self-interests of electronic journalists too often affected the content of newscasts. More television news directors than radio news directors thought there was too much quoting of unnamed sources in broadcast journalism.

There also were a few market-size-related, statistically significant differences among the news directors. Small-market news directors thought free trips to cover news and sports events were more acceptable than did large- or medium-market news directors. Large-market news directors felt doing play-by-play sports announcing for another station was more acceptable than did medium- or small-market news directors. Small-market news directors felt public figures deserved more privacy, they believed in assisting victims more and they were more supportive of the idea of licensing prospective electronic journalists.

More small- and medium-market news directors than large-market news directors thought the self-interests of electronic journalists too often affected newscast content and that the names of the "daredevils" who participate in publicity stunts should not be aired. More small- and large-market news directors than medium-market news directors thought it was okay for electronic journalists to be members of community organizations.

Some caution should be exercised before generalizing the findings of this study to the entire population of radio and television news directors in the United States. The respondents are relatively representative; however, it is likely that they have stronger feelings about ethics than do non-respondents. About 94% of the respondents believed electronic journalists should follow the guidelines contained in codes of ethics and about 40% of the news directors had adopted formal codes.

Despite its limitations, this study, continues the process of determining what behaviors are and are not ethical for electronic journalists. It is part

of a long-term examination of ethics in journalism. The basic motivation for the effort is the belief that if reasonable, practical, enforceable guidelines can be developed for journalistic codes of ethics, journalists will be more likely to follow such guidelines.[23]

If adherence to code guidelines improves, ethical theories are internalized, journalistic theories are embraced and if the public is made aware of such efforts, perhaps the ethics of journalists will improve and with that improvement will come better reporting and increased public confidence in and appreciation of journalism and journalists.

NOTES

[1]Jonathan Alter, et. al., "The Media in the Dock," Newsweek, (October 22, 1984), pp. 66-72; William A. Henry, et. al., "Journalism Under Fire," Time, (December 12, 1983), pp. 76-93; Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust, (Washington: ASNE, 1985), pp. 5-62; Relating to Readers in the '80s, (Washington: ASNE), 1984), pp. 7-44; David Shaw, "The Times Poll: Media: High Ratings Are Tempered," Los Angeles Times, (August 12, 1985), pp. 1,8; David Shaw, "The Times Poll: Public and Press--Two Viewpoints," Los Angeles Times, (August 11, 1985), pp. 1, 12-13; Andrew Radolf, "What Credibility Problem?," Editor & Publisher, (January 18, 1986), pp. 12-13; "Media Fares Fairly Well in Times Mirror Poll," Broadcasting, (January 20, 1986), pp. 72-73.

[2]Casey Bukro, "The SPJ,SDX Code's Double-Edged Sword: Accountability, Credibility," Journal of Mass Media Ethics, (Fall/Winter, 1985-86), pp. 10-13; Clifford Christians, "Enforcing Media Codes," Journal of Mass Media Ethics, (Fall/Winter, 1985-86), pp. 14-21; Phil Record, "A Code of Ethics Ought to Pinch," Quill, (October, 1984), p. 23; K. Tim Wulfemeyer, "Ethics in Sports Journalism: Tightening Up the Code," Journal of Mass Media Ethics, (Fall/Winter, 1985-86), pp. 57-67.

[3]Norman E. Isaacs, "Meeting the Barbed-Wire Frontier," Nieman Reports, (Summer, 1982), pp. 54-56; James A Michener, "On Integrity in Journalism," U.S. News & World Report, (May 4, 1981), pp. 80,79; Jeffrey Marks, "What About the Public Trust?," RTNDA Communicator, (February, 1986), p. 9; M.L. Stein, "Press Comes Under Attack at SPJ,SDX Convention," Editor & Publisher, (November 26, 1983), pp. 14-15.

[4]Ibid.

[5]John C. Merrill, "Ethics and Journalism," Ethics and the Press, John C. Merrill and Ralph D. Barney, eds., (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1978), pp. 8-14.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Cecilie Gaziano and Kristin McGrath, "Measuring the Concept of Credibility," Journalism Quarterly, (Autumn, 1986), pp. 451-462.

[8]Vernon A. Stone, "Few Firings for Ethical Problems," RTNDA Communicator, (August, 1986), p. 9.

[9]Edmund B. Lambeth, Committed Journalism, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 12-26.

[10]Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust, (Washington: ASNE, 1985), p. 16.

[11]Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), pp. 73-75.

[12]"Code of Broadcast News Ethics: Radio-Television News Directors Association," RTNDA Communicator, (October, 1987), p. 4.

[13]H. Eugene Goodwin, Groping for Ethics in Journalism, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987), pp. 367-369.

[14]Ralph S. Izard, "Gains on the Ethical Front," 1983 Journalism Ethics Report, (Washington: Society of Professional Journalists, 1983), pp. 3-4.

[15]Market size was determined using the 1986 Broadcasting Yearbook. Large-market stations were defined as those in the top 50 markets. Medium-market stations were those in the 51-100 markets and small-market stations were those in the 101-211 markets.

[16]News directors at every network-affiliated, non-satellite television station listed in the 1984 Broadcasting Yearbook were included in the sample.

[17]The random sample was selected from stations listed as "all news" in the 1986 Broadcasting Yearbook. The sample was limited to all-news stations for two major reasons:

(1)It was thought that there was a greater likelihood that such stations would be actively engaged in gathering and reporting news.

(2)It was thought that such stations would have large enough staffs to warrant the adoption or consideration of formal ethics codes/guidelines.

[18]The overall return rate was 39%. For the television news directors it was 41% and for the radio news directors it was 33%. There was a statistically significant difference in the response rate among news directors. Fewer large-market news directors responded than did medium- and small-market news directors--Large(30%), Medium(39%), Small(47%). X^2=15.844, p<.001. There was a statistically significant difference among the response rates of the television news directors. More small-market news directors than medium- or large-market news directors responded--Large(33%), Medium(39%), Small(47%). X^2=8.127, p<.05. There was a statistically significant difference among the reponse rates of the radio news directors. Fewer large-market news directors than medium- or small-market news directors responded--Large(24%), Medium(37%), Small(45%). X^2=7.193, p<.05.

[19]Responses to the open-end questions were content analyzed into distinct categories by the author and an assistant. Intercoder reliability was 94%. See William A. Scott, "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding," Public Opinion Quarterly, (Fall, 1955), pp. 321-325.

[20]Intercoder reliability was 92%. See Note 19.

[21]For more about potential legal problems associated with codes of ethics, see Robert E. Drechsel, "Media Tort Liability for Physical Harm," Journalism Quarterly, (Spring, 1987), pp. 99-105,177.

[22]Vernon A. Stone, "Radio Paces News Salary Gains," RTNDA Communicator, (February, 1987), pp. 8-11. In 1986, the average salary of radio reporters was $253 per week. TV reporters earned an average of $382 per week. Radio news directors averaged $375 per week. TV news directors earned an average of $757 per week. Reporters for small-market radio stations averaged about $201 per week while their news directors averaged $274 per week. In 1988, the average salary of radio reporters was $298 per week. TV reporters earned an average of $420 per week. Radio news directors averaged $380 per week. TV news directors earned an average of $834 per week. Reporters for small-market radio stations averaged about $220 per week while their news directors averaged about $300. See Vernon A. Stone, "Salaries Outpace Cost of Living, RTNDA Communicator, (February, 1989), pp. 40-43.

[23]Supra Note 2.

TABLE 1

Acceptable Freebies in Percent by Medium and Market Size

FREEBIE	ALL (286)	TV (220)	RA (66)	LG (74)	MD (81)	SM (131)
Freebies in general	54	51	65*	53	47	60
Tickets to news/sports events	51	47	65*	53	42	56
Non-alcoholic beverages at news events	47	46	56	49	37	48
Food at news events	46	42	59*	55	41	53
Food at non-news events	35	30	52*	41	35	33
Non-alcoholic beverages at non-news events	33	29	49*	38	32	31
Trips to cover news/sports events	27	27	26	14	17	40*
Alcoholic beverages at non-news events	22	21	27	28	20	21
Tickets to non-news events	19	15	30*	22	14	21
Alcoholic beverages at news events	14	13	17	19	10	14
Token gifts from news sources	10	11	6	11	9	10
Special discounts on merchandise	8	8	11	9	4	7
Trips to non-news events	5	4	6	3	2	6

*p<.05

TABLE 2

Acceptable Moonlighting Opportunities in Percent by Medium and Market Size

OPPORTUNITY	ALL (286)	TV (220)	RA (66)	LG (74)	MD (81)	SM (131)
Moonlighting in general	81	78	95*	84	83	79
Non-journalism jobs	76	72	91*	77	79	80
Sports for a co-owned station	60	59	68	70	58	55 *
Sports for a non-co-owned station	39	39	42	50	36	34 *
Other journalism-related jobs	39	35	53*	42	41	35
"Out-of-market" commercials	36	31	55*	32	44	33
Public relations for non-profit group	36	34	42	32	38	36
Local commercials by weathercasters	16	13	29*	19	11	13
Local commercials by sportscasters	15	12	28*	19	10	16
Public relations for profit-making groups	7	4	19*	7	5	8
Local commercials by reporters	5	2	17*	5	2	6
Local commercials by anchors	5	1	17*	5	2	5

*p<.05

TABLE 3

Agreement With Statements in Percent by Medium and Market Size

STATEMENT	ALL (286)	TV (220)	RA (66)	LG (74)	MD (81)	SM (131)
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST						
Membership in Community Groups Okay	92	91	97	92	86	96*
Holding Office in Community Groups Okay	65	65	64	62	58	70
Journalist-Sponsored Contests Okay	100	100	100	100	100	100
Non-Journalist-Sponsored Contests Okay	68	68	59	75	62	68
Self-Interest Conflicts Too Frequent	27	24	38*	18	27	33*
INVASION OF PRIVACY						
Intruding on Private Grief NOT Okay	74	72	74	70	73	77
Public People Haver Fewer Privacy Rights	80	81	77	86	84	73*
Report Private Life Only if Relevant	75	76	70	77	69	78
Hidden Camera/Mics NOT Okay	40	31	70*	42	39	40
"Ambush Interviews" NOT Okay	47	47	52	44	49	48
Reading Memos Without Okay NOT Okay	68	67	68	61	74	68
Rape Victims Should NOT Be Named	91	88	95	85	91	94
No Names of Victims Unless Families Know	99	98	100	99	100	99
No Suicides Unless Public Person Involved	85	86	79	80	84	89
No Restrictions on Reporting in Courts	62	59	68	60	61	63
REPORTING TECHNIQUES/STYLES						
Going "Undercover" Okay	84	82	86	91	82	82
"Checkbook Journalism" NOT Okay	88	89	83	91	91	85
"Going Live" Without Reason Okay	31	31	29	38	29	29
"Pooling" Should Be Done if Asked	80	78	83	80	81	79
Holding Stories Should Be Done if Asked	37	30	49*	34	31	41
No "Dirty Tricks" on Competitors	92	91	92	93	91	92
Violating Traffic Laws Okay	24	21	33	26	22	25
Victims Should Be Helped if Possible	59	55	60	46	58	68*
Granting Confidentiality Okay	96	94	97	93	96	97
Too Many Unnamed Sources in R-TV News	54	59	35*	48	59	54
News Executive Must Know Name of Source	70	72	60	65	70	72

TABLE 3(continued)

STATEMENT	ALL	TV	RA	LG	MD	SM
NEWSCAST PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES/STYLES						
Too Much Sensationalism in R-TV News	38	37	38	42	35	37
Too Much "Fluff" in R-TV News	35	34	37	34	35	37
Too Much Emphasis on Video/Natural Sound	19	19	20	14	24	19
Not Enough Background Information Provided	82	82	78	75	88	83
Clean Up Profane Language Used by Sources	51	49	50	55	55	46
Correct Factual Mistakes Made by Sources	43	44	36	34	44	48
Correct Grammar Mistakes Made by Sources	22	21	24	15	25	24
Names of "Daredevils" Should NOT Air	34	31	43	21	41	38*
Names of Terrorists Should NOT Air	12	10	18	8	14	14
IMPROVING ETHICS IN BROADCAST JOURNALISM						
Require Academic Program/License	15	11	24*	5	17	19*
Punish Violators of Codes of Ethics	28	26	33	25	31	29

* $p<.05$